United Nations S/2001/1214

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 December 2001

Original: English

Letter dated 14 December 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to forward the final communiqué of the Southern African Development Community Ministerial Task Force on Developments in Zimbabwe (see annex). The communiqué is being forwarded to counter misleading and unsubstantiated observations concerning Zimbabwe raised in the addendum to the report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/2001/1072).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Misheck **Muchetwa**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

01-70407 (E) 201201

Annex to the letter dated 14 December 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Final communiqué of the Southern African Development Community Ministerial Task Force on Developments in Zimbabwe

1. The SADC Ministerial Task Force on Developments in Zimbabwe met in Harare, Zimbabwe on 10-11 December 2001 at the invitation of Honourable Dr I.S.G. Mudenge, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe. The meeting was convened pursuant to the decision by the Summit Task Force on Developments in Zimbabwe which mandated Ministers to work with the Government of Zimbabwe with a view to assisting the latter in finding solutions to the economic and political issues affecting the country.

2. The meeting was chaired by Honourable Lilian E. Patel, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi, who is also the Chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers. The following Ministers attended the meeting:

Angola	Hon. Toko Diakenga Serao Deputy Minister, Ministry of External Relations
	Hon. Gaspar S. Rufino Vice Minister, Ministry of Defence
	Hon. Zacarias Sambeni Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture
Botswana	Hon. Mompati Merafhe Minister of Foreign Affairs
Malawi	Hon. R.T.C. Munyenyembe Minister of Defence
Mozambique	Hon. Francisco Caetano Madeira Minister in the Office of the President responsible for Parliamentary and Diplomatic Affairs
	Hon. Hipolito Patricio Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
Namibia	Hon. Tuliameni Kalomoh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting

South Africa	Hon. Membathisi Mdladlana Minister of Labour
Zimbabwe	Hon. Dr. I.S.G Mudenge Minister of Foreign Affairs

3. Hon. Dr. I.S.G. Mudenge, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe, warmly welcomed the Task Force members and indicated that they had been invited to see and hear how Zimbabwe has approached the question of land reform, and how far they had gone in implementing the commitments they made at Abuja as well as progress made since the Summit Task Force meeting held in September 2001. In this context, Hon. Mudenge informed the meeting that the fast-track land resettlement programme that deals with communal land (A1) is basically concluded. The programme had now moved to the implementation of the A2 model which deals with commercial land, and that the programme of delisting farms was continuing.

4. Hon. Mudenge indicated that the commitments made by the Government of Zimbabwe at Abuja were being implemented and that interaction with the UNDP was underway.

5. In her statement to the meeting, the Chairperson, Hon. Lilian Patel observed that land is a critical and sensitive issue worldwide, and that land reform and redistribution are requisites for any country's survival and development. Hon. Patel underscored the centrality of land to any meaningful programme of empowerment and to the socio-economic development prospects of the entire SADC Region. She indicated that rather than mediating between the parties, the mandate of the Task Force was to facilitate dialogue amongst stakeholders with a view to assisting in charting the way forward. Hon. Patel emphasized that the SADC initiative is aimed at complementing similar efforts such as the Abuja initiative. She stressed that the full cooperation and goodwill of all stakeholders within and outside Zimbabwe was essential for the success of this initiative.

6. Ministers received a briefing from the Government of Zimbabwe on the actions taken to implement the Abuja Agreement, and welcomed the improved atmosphere of calm and stability. They encouraged the Government of Zimbabwe to continue to embark on its positive actions, and called on all stakeholders to support these actions to further reduce tensions. Ministers urged the Government and stakeholders to firmly establish dialogue which was necessary for national confidence and consensus building.

7. Ministers also received a briefing from the Government of Zimbabwe on progress made in implementing the decisions of the SADC Summit Task Force held in September 2001. In this regard, they were gratified to learn that violence on the farms had reduced significantly, and that the few reported incidents were being dealt with under the criminal justice system, in accordance with the rule of law, irrespective of the political affiliation of the alleged perpetrators. Ministers welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court made in November 2001, declaring that the Land Reform and Resettlement Programme was lawful and in accordance with the laws and constitution of the country.

8. Ministers received a progress report on the implementation of the Land Resettlement and noted that farming activities on both communal and commercial land had intensified. The meeting was also informed of the criteria and procedures adopted for land acquisition and allocation, and figures on the number of beneficiaries were presented

9. Ministers welcomed the commitment by the Government of Zimbabwe to free and fair Presidential elections scheduled to be held before 31 March 2002. In this regard, they also welcomed the legislative and other mechanisms the Government was putting in place to guard against violence and to ensure transparency, which included allowing party agents to monitor the voting process from the beginning up to the vote counting stage.

10. The meeting noted that according to the Electoral Act and Zimbabwe's Constitution, the only body empowered to manage and monitor elections was the Electoral Supervisory Commission. The election monitors will be drawn from the Zimbabwe public service. The meeting also noted that Zimbabwe had no objection to the presence of invited international observers, and that invitations will be issued once the election date has been fixed.

11. Ministers expressed their concern at distorted and negative perceptions of Zimbabwe projected by the international and regional media, and appealed to all concerned to adopt a culture of objectivity, fairness and balance in the discussion of, and reporting on Zimbabwe. Ministers requested Zimbabwe to supply them with factual information and provide briefings on a regular basis to enable them to assist in correcting the negative perceptions.

12. Ministers accepted Zimbabwe's invitation for SADC to witness the Zimbabwe/EU dialogue under Article 96 of the ACP/EU Partnership Agreement, alongside the ACP and the OAU. They expressed the hope that the dialogue would, in practice, prove to be a true dialogue between

partners where negative outcomes would be explicitly precluded from the outset, in keeping with the letter and spirit of Article 96, and of the Partnership Agreement as a whole.

13. Ministers were concerned about the slow pace of dialogue between Zimbabwe and Britain which had not resulted in the anticipated flow of financial resources in support of the land reform programme as agreed in Abuja. They, therefore, urged both parties to intensify dialogue in a spirit of mutual understanding with a view to achieving lasting and sustainable results to the land reform programme.

14. With regard to the establishment of a Multi Party Parliamentary Committee as recommended by the Summit Task Force, it was noted that although this had not been established, mechanisms were already in place for parties to interact in the context of several Parliamentary Portfolio Committees. Ministers encouraged all parties to make effective use of these Committees and to endeavour to dialogue on issues of national importance outside the confines of parliament as well.

15. Ministers noted that a UNDP assessment mission had spent three weeks in the country and held consultations with Government and various stakeholders. They also noted that the mission also undertook several field visits to assess the situation on the ground and is expected to present its report in the near future. Ministers expressed their eagerness that the report be completed as soon as possible, as it is hoped that it will assist not only in addressing the issues of assistance to resettled farmers and compensation to farm workers, but also in the provision of the much needed social and economic infrastructure on the farms.

16. Recalling the 2000 SADC Summit decision opposing sanctions against Zimbabwe, Ministers reiterated SADC's opposition to the imposition of sanctions against Zimbabwe as this would not only hurt citizens of the country, but would also have profound implications on the region as a whole. Ministers therefore, called upon all concerned countries to refrain from imposing sanctions such as the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Bill, and opt for dialogue.

17. Ministers received presentations from the following stakeholders:

a) Farmers Union:
   - Commercial Farmers Union
   - Zimbabwe Farmers Union
   - Zimbabwe Joint Resettlement Initiative

b) War Veterans

c) Chiefs

d) Churches

e) General Agriculture and Plantation Workers Union

e) Political Parties:
ZANU (PF)
MDC

f) Business Associations:
- Affirmative Action Group
- Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries

g) Media Representatives:
- Public Media
- Private Media

18. In their presentations, the stakeholders were generally in agreement that land was at the core of the problems facing the country and that the Land Resettlement Programme was necessary and had reached a point of no return. In this regard, Ministers called upon the international community to assist Zimbabwe in the implementation of the programme. Ministers noted that the two major political parties also agreed in principle with the need for land reform and that differences were on methodology.

19. The stakeholders were also generally in agreement that there had been a decrease in the incidence of violence, although there were still pockets of criminal activities which were being dealt with in accordance with the laws of Zimbabwe. Ministers commended both the ZANU PF and MDC for the education programmes they were pursuing to discourage their members from engaging in violence.

20. The Zimbabwe Farmers Union welcomed the recent amendments to the Land Acquisition Act as a positive and constructive move. However, the Commercial Farmers Union felt that the amendment of the Act had been effected without adequate consultations with them, and that this had made commercial farmers feel vulnerable and exposed to displacement.

21. Ministers also noted the concerns raised by other stakeholders with regard to the effect of land acquisitions on the welfare of farm workers. Ministers urged the Government to ensure that the interests of farm workers are taken into account in the implementation of the Land Reform Programme.

22. Ministers appealed to SADC Member States and the business community in the region to support Zimbabwe's business community, and in particular its attempts to secure credit and foreign exchange for the normal conduct of business.

23. Ministers expressed their sincere gratitude to President Robert Mugabe for finding time out of his busy schedule to interact with them. They also thanked the Government and people of Zimbabwe for the warm hospitality and the stakeholder representatives for their valuable contributions.

Harare, Zimbabwe
11 December 2001